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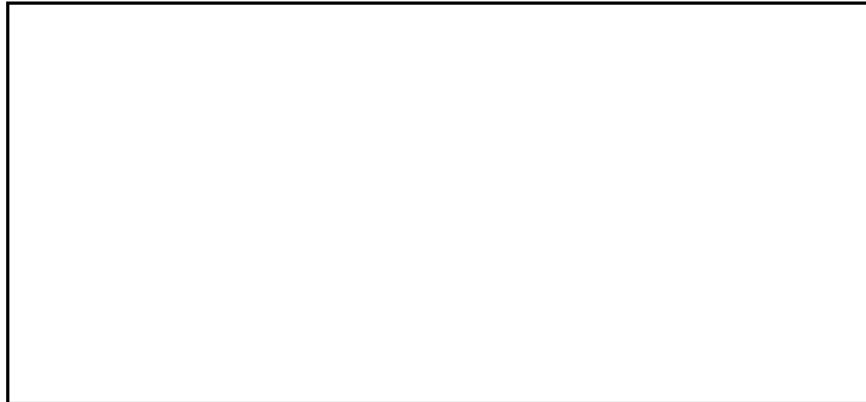
14 March 1968

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(Submission for COINS semiannual report)

COINS Evaluation Panel

The Evaluation Panel was reconstituted by memorandum dated 30 January 1968 of the Chairman, COINS Committee. Its members are:



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The tasks and responsibilities assigned to the panel are as follows:

1. Develop and present by 1 June 1968 to the COINS Committee for approval a plan for acquiring, analyzing and presenting data on:
 - a. System utilization,
 - b. System performance, and
 - c. User reaction to the system.
2. Oversee and coordinate execution of the approved plan.
3. Recommend such other data acquisition and analysis as in the Panel's judgment is necessary or desirable in connection with system evaluation.

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The panel has met four times in February and March 1968 and is now organized into subgroups, each of which is developing a draft of one of the following portions of a plan for gathering and analyzing data on COINS:

- Hardware/software system performance
- User log form for recording certain needed data
- User survey to gather additional data on circumstances of use and user reactions
- Environmental conditions in participating agencies that may affect use

The framework of the plan that is being developed is as follows:

1. Statistical analysis of performance and of minimal data on utilization and user reaction.

Data on the performance of the hardware/software system will be gathered systematically for a year beginning in July 1968 in two ways -- by the system itself in a log maintained by the switch on all traffic through the switch and by means of user log forms completed by users at each terminal. The switch log is already functioning and maintaining a record of the present DIA/NSA activity. The user log form will serve to gather data on the identity of the user and his office, the times at which queries are placed and responses received at the terminal, the user's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the response, the principal reason(s) for dissatisfaction, and an indication as to whether the same information could have been obtained in some other way in time to serve the user's purposes. The data from the log forms will be coded and together with the data from the switch log will be analyzed at the end of each two-month period throughout the year, in order to obtain statistics on use of each file, response times, reasons for delays, non-responses and reasons for them, ~~reasons why proper responses did not occur~~, and user reactions.

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The user log form will be tried out on some present users before a final version of the form is recommended for use throughout COINS.

2. More intensive analysis of utilization and user reaction.

An interview guide is being developed for in-depth interviews of selected users in order to learn more about the circumstances of use, with attention to both favorable and unfavorable experiences with the system, and to obtain users' views on deficiencies, needed improvements, training, potential use of such a system, and alternatives to COINS. Selection of the sample of users to be interviewed will be based largely on the bimonthly statistical data on use and user reaction.

3. Description of environmental conditions affecting use.

In order that the data on use and user reaction may be properly understood, participating agencies will be asked to describe the environmental conditions in each agency that may affect use of COINS, such as training, assistance provided, steps taken to encourage or urge potential users to try the system, locations of terminals in relation to potential users, and previous experience with on-line querying of computer-based files.

On March 13, as a result of the CODIB discussion of the report of the ad hoc Panel on Files for Use in COINS, the Evaluation Panel was asked if its plan for gathering and analyzing data could be restricted to the set of ten files recommended for inclusion in the COINS "experiment" by the CODIB Panel, even though other files will be available for use in the system. The Evaluation Panel's response is that in order to make statistical analyses and estimates of performance characteristics of the COINS hardware/software system it is essential to have data on all the activity in the system. Data on the restricted set of files can be presented separately

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if desired, but data on the other files in the system will also be available. The in-depth study of system utilization and user reaction could be focussed primarily on users of the restricted set of files, but it would seem to be preferable to defer decisions on the composition of the interview samples until some data on actual use of files in the system are available.

Problems

Since data on use and performance are to be gathered from 1 July 1968, prompt attention to the training of potential users is crucial. Otherwise we may be in the position of gathering data on use when, in fact, very few persons know how to use the system and query the files.

It is essential that participating agencies see to it that a unique reference number is assigned to each query as it is forwarded to the switch and make provision for relating the user log form in each instance to that query reference number. It is also essential that the agencies provide certain data on their retrieval systems, the number and size of queues in each system, and the numbers of local queries to each file competing with COINS queries for processing. These requirements are being discussed informally with those responsible for the operation of the agency systems.

Recommendations

The Panel is not yet prepared to make formal recommendations.

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13 March 1968

Memorandum to Members of the COINS Evaluation Panel:

As a result of the CODIB meeting this morning, we must make the following the first discussion item on our agenda for 21 March: Report of the CODIB Panel on Files for Use in COINS. A copy of the report is enclosed for each of you who were not present at the meeting this morning.

25X1 asked how the CODIB Panel's recommendations would affect the work of the COINS Evaluation Panel; and whether the Evaluation Panel would agree to restrict its data-gathering activities to the set of files recommended by the CODIB Panel. It was my understanding that the intent was to allow the other files to remain in the system and to be used, but to consider them not part of the "experiment" and to ignore them in gathering and analyzing data on the COINS experiment. Speaking off the top of my head, I said that I thought it would not be desirable to ignore the other files, but this is a key question for us to discuss.

I must report to CODIB on 27 March on the Evaluation Panel's reaction to the report and recommendations of the Files Panel. Would you therefore please study the report and come prepared to discuss it on 21 March. In addition, it would be helpful to me if you would bring with you a written list, which you could leave with me, of the main points you think we should make in responding to CODIB.



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COINS EVALUATION PANEL

Agenda

21 March 1968, 0900 hours
B Bldg., DIA, Arlington Hall

1. Approval of minutes of the 7 March meeting

The minutes will be distributed before the meeting if they are completed in time.

2. Discussion of draft components of plan

a. Coins environmental report

We shall discuss the draft distributed by
[redacted] at the March 7 meeting.

b. User log form

A combined form for gathering data needed for analysis of performance and some user reaction should be approved at this meeting if possible, so that it could be tried out at some terminals.

c. User survey by means of in-depth interviews

A report on this topic will be presented by Stein/Smutniak.

d. System performance

Status of the plan for gathering and analyzing performance data, [redacted]

PLEASE NOTE:

Because the meeting room will be available only until 11:00 AM, we shall start the meeting at 9:00, and then adjourn no later than 11:00 to visit the switch.

If you have not already done so, have your special clearance sent to DIA.

The DIA facility is located at Arlington Hall, on the south side of Arlington Blvd. (highway 50) just west of Glebe Road. From the guard house at the entrance, keep to the right to reach B Bldg., which is the first large building you come to after taking the right fork.

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